



ABC News has a fresh look



We've made it easier to find the stories that matter to you with a new homepage, personalised sections and more.

## A spike in COVID deaths has driven a decline in Australian life expectancy for the second year running

By [Josh Robertson](#)

Health

Thu 7 Nov 2024 at 11:56pm



### In short:

Australian life expectancy has gone backwards for the second year straight after a surge in COVID-19 deaths in 2022.

An Australian girl born today is expected to live to 85.1 years, and a boy to 81.1 years

Australians still have the fourth-highest life expectancy in the world

after Japanese, Swiss and Koreans.

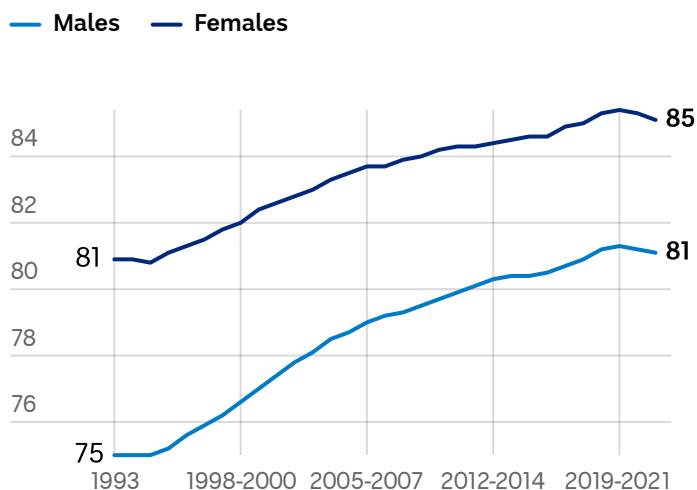
A decades-defying slump in life expectancy for Australians has continued for a second year straight, with a peak in COVID-19 deaths driving a greater decline among women.

Data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) showed the life expectancy for women had fallen by 0.2 years between 2021 and 2023, compared with a drop of 0.1 years for men.

Australian women continue to outlive men, with a female born today expected to live 85.1 years and a male 81.1 years.

An Australian celebrating their 60th birthday today can expect to live longer - another 24.2 years for a male and 27.1 years for a female.

### Life expectancy at birth 1993 to 2021-2023



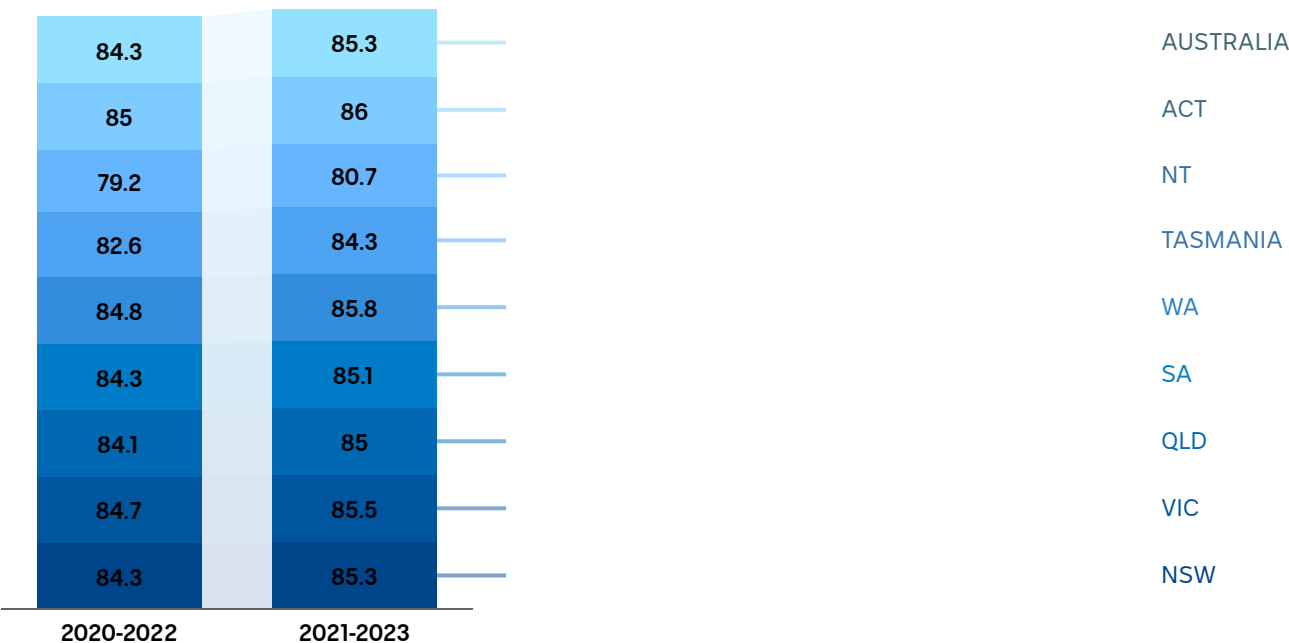
ABS / Source: [Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian](#) / [Get the data](#)

Those numbers reflect having survived the first several decades of life.

ABS head of demography Beidar Cho said the overall drop in life expectancy was due to COVID-19 deaths spiking at 15,982, a rise of 4,100 from 2020 to 2022.

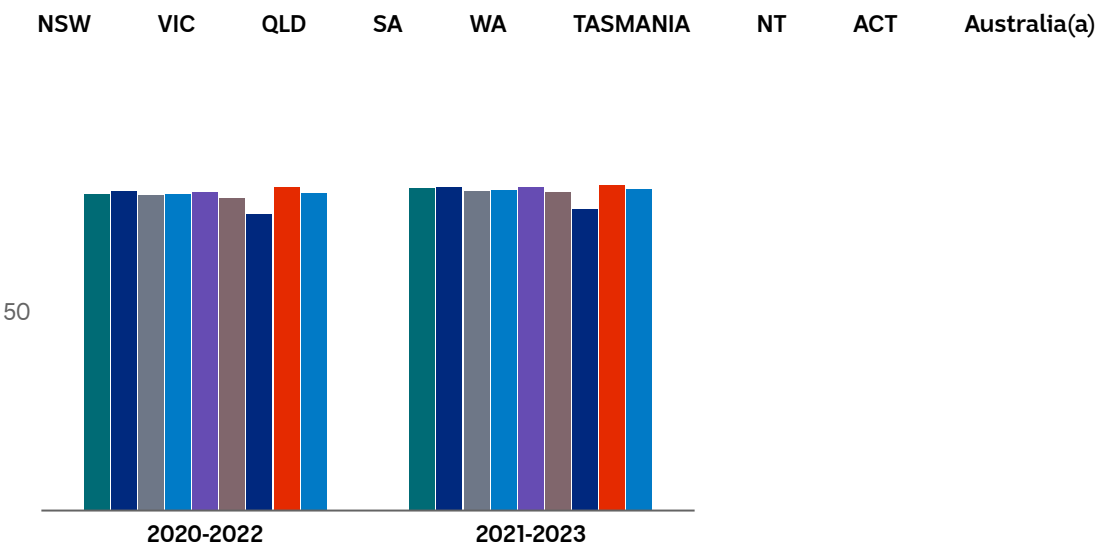
Australia's death rate increased in 2021 but was still lower than before the pandemic.

**Female life expectancy at birth, per state**



ABC / Source: [ABS](#) / [Get the data](#)

**Male life expectancy at birth, per state**



ABC / Source: [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) / [Get the data](#)

In 2022, the number of deaths jumped by almost 20,000, almost half of those

attributed to COVID-19.

Last year, the number of COVID-19 deaths almost halved to 5,001.

The pandemic-era decline followed decades of Australians living longer.

"Despite this decrease, Australians still have a higher life expectancy than many comparable countries, like New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Canada," Ms Cho said.

The latest comparable data from overseas showed only Japanese (84.1 years), Swiss (83.7 years) and Koreans (83.6 years) lived longer than Australians, who shared the same life expectancy as Spaniards (83.2).

Sweden, Luxembourg, Israel, Italy and Ireland rounded out the top 10.



Japanese people have the longest life expectancy in the world. (ABC News: Yumi Asada)

Within Australia, the ABS found life expectancy at birth was generally higher

in capital cities than in remote areas.

Suburbs in Sydney boasted the highest expectancy, with males living in Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury expected to reach 85.5 years, and females in North Sydney and Hornsby 88.2 years.



Australians in capital cities can generally expect to live longer than those in remote areas. (ABC News: Maren Preuss)

The lowest expected ages for both males and females were in outback Northern Territory (71.9 years and 75.5 years respectively).

By state or territory, the Australian Capital Territory had the highest life expectancy for both males (81.7 years) and females (85.7 years) — sharing the latter with Western Australia.

While the whole of the Northern Territory also had the lowest expectancy for both men (76.4 years) and women (80.4 years), it showed the largest rise for both over the decade to 2023 (1.5 years and 1.2 years).

The Northern Territory was the only state or territory where male life expectancy increased between 2021 and 2023 (0.2 years).

Posted Thu 7 Nov 2024 at 11:56pm, updated Fri 8 Nov 2024 at 1:24am